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CURRENT OPINION

Philosophy as the Servant of Man

During the last few years the members of the Pragmatic School of Philosophers have been insisting that the task of philosophy is scientific control and direction of the progress of human life. This note is struck again by Professor A. W. Moore in the March number of the *Philosophic Review*. He calls philosophy to the high duty of creating, organizing, and harmonizing human values and purposes. The present tragedy in Europe is sufficient evidence that the time has come for the application of science as the method of values. This does not mean that science is to be called to the defense of values born of instinct, custom, and myth. It means that scientific intelligence must be operative in the formation of the values and purposes of our social life. It must be the method not only of maintaining but of obtaining them. It means not the abolition of instinct and custom but the use of these as the material for new values.

This is the issue:

Are we ready to take toward our social, political, and religious values the same experimental attitude, subjecting them to the same tests of international scrutiny and criticism which we demand in our scientific procedure? It is the issue of the democratization of values. And it is neither sentimentalism nor demagoguery to say that it is at bottom the issue of the world-war. The world can never be made "safe for democracy" so long as tribal survivals can avail themselves of a theory which places values above or below, at any rate beyond, scientific treatment on the ground that they are either "unique" or "universal." What Lincoln said of the nation is now true of the world. That it cannot exist half slave and half free means at bottom that it cannot go on with an alleged free science and a tribal morality. If either is not free neither is free.

This it is that makes the present problem and present opportunity of philosophy. It

will be a great and splendid work if philosophy shall be able to abolish the esoteric attitude, the attitude of the tribal medicine men toward our social values and purposes. This is the field for the service of the highest intelligence. If the philosopher will teach and preach the necessity of this change of attitude toward personality and values and toward science he will "not only be doing his bit in the present world-crisis but much more in preventing the recurrence of such crises in the future which indeed is the issue of the present crisis." Surely there is inspiration in the hope of being able to substitute reason for shrapnel as the method of dealing with problems involved in the formation and in the conflicts of our human values and purposes.

A Finite God

During the last year there has appeared from the pen of Dr. Ray H. Dotterer in the *Reformed Church Quarterly* a series of articles presenting an argument for a finitist theology. He brings the fruit of this extensive study into brief compass in a criticism of the ideas of God presented by H. G. Wells and Reeman. The article is in the *Hibbert Journal* for April and is entitled, "The Doctrine of a Finite God in War-Time Thought." The idea of a finite God is not a war product, though the war has given acceleration to a movement long under way. The problem of evil has always been an anxious one. Theology was able, however, to keep man quiescent and humble. Mill made a protest in the interest of the goodness of God. In this generation there have been many voices raised. James insisted that the only God worthy of the name must be finite. H. Rashdall argued for a limited God. G. B. Shaw wanted an experimenting God. Bergson's system demands dualism. While in the past theology has not been

greatly influenced in the long run by passing fashions in philosophy, and while the traditional idea of God as infinite, eternal, immutable, omniscient, and omnipotent has survived other wars, it is probable that in our age there will be a radical change in the conception of God; for "never before in Christian lands has there been so numerous a public emancipated wholly or in part from the authority of the church and scripture and ready to welcome unconventional winds of doctrine."

Both Wells and Reeman argue the general thesis that the apparent dualism of good and evil is not merely apparent; that the world-struggle is a struggle in which every good-will and therefore God himself must be thought to have a genuine part. Reeman's argument may be briefly stated. The present known facts of the world force us to one of four conclusions: either God is good but not omnipotent, that is, he loves the good and wants to further it, but is just about as helpless to sweep evil away at one stroke as we ourselves are; or that God is omnipotent but not good, that is, has the power to destroy evil but not the will; or what we call good is not the real good as God sees it (which would mean of course that we do not know what good is); or that God has no concern with mankind and no interest in what happens to us. From these it seems best to believe that God is now doing the best he can and that if God could end such things as the horrors of war and destroy the world's evil tomorrow he would. Hence he must be finite. Dotterer points out that the old theologians were never foolish enough to argue that omnipotence in God meant "ability to do anything that might be mentioned." Omnipotence must be defined. Aquinas recognizes a logical limitation in that God cannot actualize a contradiction. There is also an ethical limitation, for good and evil are not arbitrary conceptions; they do not depend upon the will of the omnipotent one. We must also

recognize a temporal limitation, since God will have to be limited by the law of time; his purposes cannot be accomplished in an instant. This last limitation of omnipotence is not a self-limitation either, unless we are ready to hold that for God the world-order is only a gigantic game.

Traditional theology emphasized the logical limitation and added that the evils of the world were the condition of the highest good. Modern theology tries to explain evil as the necessary means of producing such virtues as courage, patience, industry, fidelity, etc. None of these defenses can stand. There seems to be pure evil. How can insanity be rationalized? Dotterer states his own views as follows:

I submit that the hypothesis of a god of limited power, considered merely as an hypothesis put forth to explain the facts of experience is more satisfying than its rival. It conflicts with none of the facts: it harmonizes with all: while at best, its rival accounts for only some of them. It makes our struggle with evil a real struggle, not a mere fictitious thing. If we say that God enters genuinely into the experience of struggle, then the difference between the kind of goodness ascribed to God and that ascribed to man disappears and all men of good-will will have a powerful motive for action in the thought that, in engaging in the struggle, they are co-operating with, and imitating, God himself.

There is one great objection to the doctrine of a finite God and that is that such a God gives no assurance of victory. Dotterer answers this difficulty by saying: (1) that if the omnipotence theory gives us the assurance of victory it at the same time takes away all meaning from the idea of victory; if evil is necessary, eventual overcoming of evil is illusion; (2) that it is at least as easy to believe in the existence of a good-will, which, though not infinite in power, still possesses sufficient power to assure the ultimate salvation of the world, as it is to believe in a good-will that is omnipotent.

The Problem of Evil

Professor Dickenson S. Miller is to contribute his quota to the new "philosophy of God and God's dealings with mankind." Under the foregoing title he outlines the argument of his series of articles which are to follow in the new and excellent *Anglican Theological Review*. The first number appeared in May. The problem of evil is a good starting-point for a new doctrine of God because it is as momentous as any with which theology deals, and its attempted solution has held a peculiar snare for Christian thinkers. The solutions have explained too much. They have attempted to justify God by explaining evil away. Every "solution" argues that God permits evil because it is better to have it than not. But the religion of Christ arises in the conflict with evil. Men are to be redeemed from evil. It is a formidable enemy. Our fight with it is a fight to death. But when theology is formulated God is thought to be so good and supreme that there is the tendency to explain away the very evil which Christianity arose to conquer. We must not purchase a dubious satisfaction for theology by cutting the ground from under religion. In brief summary Professor Miller argues that evil is not a good in disguise; that the Christian duty is to subdue evil, and this is more important than to explain it; we subdue it by God's help, for it is his will to vanquish it; the faith which gives conquest is that God is good, that he is our Captain in the conflict, and that he is supreme. He is, moreover, the underlying foundation that the conflict presupposes, for the moral law and our standard of goodness must be rooted in the nature of things; we are not to deny that this is a bad world; we are not to deny that God is supreme. These are vital parts of the Christian religion. "To solve the problem of evil is to destroy Christianity." Yet the relation of God's power to the state of this world is something which the logical understanding is not yet in a position to for-

mulate because it has not yet a sufficient grasp of God's nature and power. Christian dogma has refused to simplify at the risk of sacrificing ultimate truth, even though to cling to dogma meant to believe a mystery. In this it has been wise. Solutions of the problem of evil have tended to confuse the moral sense. They have tried to prove that pain and creature ills are not of necessity evil; but they are evil for the religion of Christ. God does not and man may not permit evil. God would wield man as a deadly instrument for its destruction. To face it religiously is to conquer it if we can. The Providence of God is the source only of the good. Being the source of good, God would have us be the sources of good also. The supreme need in religion is a synthesis; that is, spiritual aspiration must be logically and perfectly united with the care for humanity and all its concrete needs.

The War within the War

In the *Dial* for June 20 Will Durant displays a danger signal to the optimists who expect that the sufferings of the war are to give way inevitably to a new social order of surpassing splendor. Governments of democratic nations are being compelled to become more aristocratic with every passing month. The needs of finance and personnel have driven governments more and more into the hands of "successful" and hence conservative men. While we idly hope for a beautiful new world, men who desire the continuation of that system under which they seized supremacy are now setting in motion forces of obstruction, actively moving to secure control of state and federal governments and enlarging their power over the media of public information. It is possible for this war to end with reaction enthroned unless the lovers of a more decent world bend seriously to their great task.

The power of financial monopolies has now become internationalized. Finance in this form may control newspapers and films

and shape public opinion. It would be easy to drown democracy in a sea of poisoned ink. "The gods of the *status quo* can threaten an over-liberal government with almost irresistible assault." They could practically control elections.

What kind of thinking does reconstruction need? Thought is not an instrument for understanding only; it is an organ for resynthesis of analyzed experience into effective response to a new and fluent situation. Thought has been too much concerned with analysis, too little related to action. The function of intelligence is to remake the world as well as to understand it. Yet only the selfish capitalist has put the creed into practice.

Another unhappy element in the situation is that most men of the active type are conservative, while thoughtful men are liberal. One thing is clear: the haters of the new are so intrenched that they can be successfully attacked only after the abandonment of generalities for a study of details. The establishment of an unfettered institute for political research which has been accomplished is a sign of promise. Why may we not hope for nation-wide research into all the vital phases of the social problem and for a means of distributing results? "Only a fund of facts and a power to think can preserve the voter from the avalanche of paid suggestion that will fall upon him from platform and periodical. Without these safeguards votes follow the line of greatest gold and triumphant plutocracy smiles Mephistopheleanly." The enemy of the new social order is active now, and only superior knowledge and decision put to work at once, while the war is on, can secure our safety.

The Meaning of Democracy

That the war is making a profound change in our manner of living and in our ideals is evident to everyone. It is also becoming clear that we of America are fighting, not merely that we may live, but that

we may live in a specific way and that a certain specific form of life may through us retain a place in the world. We desire to be democratic. But what do we mean? Professor R. B. Perry undertakes a definition of the term in the July number of the *International Journal of Ethics*. There are three great ideas associated with the democratic tradition: equality, liberty, and popular government. The two last define what we mean by political democracy. The idea of equality defines what we mean by "social democracy."

Why is it that the word "equality" so stirs the hearts of men? The answer is that it appeals to five of our strongest motives. The first of these is compassion, which prompts men to relieve the distress of their fellows. It is, however, remedial rather than constructive. It halts the vanguard of civilization that the stragglers may be brought up. It is less interested in the perfection of the extraordinary few than in the normal man. It is stronger in women than in men. It is the link between democracy and humanity. From this viewpoint the idea of equality means the community and mutuality of life in which all men shall achieve happiness and perfection together at a pace which requires neither the abandonment nor the exploitation of the unfortunate. Secondly, equality appeals to the motive of emulation. It prompts a man to surpass his fellows. But this implies a fair chance and equal opportunity. There must be also "effective personal freedom" or freedom that can actually be used to advantage. Equal opportunity often has to be created by actually intervening against established injustice. Men must be given a fair chance, not an off-chance. A third motive to equality is self-respect or the resentment of arrogance. It is dislike of conscious superiority, because this aggravates accidental advantages or ignores merit or because it implies an attitude of disparagement toward one's self and forces one to self-defense.

Humiliation in this respect may produce violent hatred, as the French Revolution amply demonstrated. A man cannot be given opportunity without acknowledgment of dignity. A fourth motive to equality is in the sentiment of fraternity. This need not imply intimacy or friendship but only courtesy, fair-mindedness, and admission of one's limitations. It leaves room for hero-worship, but a great man is always on trial. Moreover his success does not lift him above the level of his fellows as a man. "Only those will be happy in a democracy who prefer to be greeted neither with the upward slant of obsequiousness nor by the downward slant of condescension, but by the horizontal glance of fraternal self-respect." Finally must be recognized the motive of envy. This motive is doubly vicious; it makes men dislike, not the consciousness of superiority, but the substance of superiority. It is negative and destructive. It seeks equality by impeding the leaders. Envy gives rise to a cult of vulgarity; discourages every sort of eminence and so robs society of the services of the expert and leader. This is a great danger, for the best things have to be worked for, and without patience and slow cumulative effort the great things are not attainable. To disparage and despise the best things and the great things is an offense to mankind.

What is the use of opportunity if there is nothing worth gaining? We must believe that nothing is too good for a democracy. Science, philosophy, art, virtue, and saintliness must be as reverently regarded, as earnestly sought and cultivated as formerly. Otherwise the much-prized opportunity which a democracy affords is an equal opportunity for nothing. . . . In so far as social democracy means a compassionate regard for all human beings as having feelings, powers, and capacities of the same generic type; in so far as it means the equalizing of opportunity and a mutual respect it rests upon sound and incontrovertible ethical grounds. But in so far as it exalts failure, inverts standards, and acts as a drag upon the forward movement of life it is reactionary and abhorrent.

Will America have the courage to see democracy through? It will require courage to make the necessary internal readjustments. Social democracy will have to be paid for. It will mean the surrendering and curtailing of personal advantages for the sake of those who lag behind in the struggle for life. It will also require courage behind democratic convictions to carry the war through to a victory that other peoples may be permitted to proceed with democracy. "If we are democrats, then Germany as at present governed, motivated, and inspired is our irreconcilable enemy."

Personal Problems of the Soldier

Professor W. E. Hocking presents an estimate of the probable influence of the war upon the moral life of the American soldier in the *Yale Review* for July. He points out that it is inevitable that the old rigidities will be loosened in such a completely new life. The interest of the soldier in woman is deepened both by the fact that he feels himself in some manner the protector of the weak and by his segregated life. He feels the need of companionship and prefers the care-free informality of chance meetings to the correctness of formal entertainment. He is eager for brightness and vivacity after the strain and monotony of the trenches. The British colonial soldier has proven himself able to stand the test, and both British and French have shown a higher standard of sex honor than the German. The German method of countenancing vice by providing for the physical safety of the troops in that regard tends to coarsen the soldier. The American has a high standard, for democracy cannot endure the suppression of one sex nor the refusal of either sex to assume the responsibility for elevating and ennobling the moral life of the other. Professor Hocking believes that a large percentage of the American troops will remain straight under any circumstances. They are deterred from the easier course, not by fear

of physical results, nor by regulations, nor by any other overt reasons, but simply by an ingrained soundness of feeling or by a sense of right lying deeper than the human level. Some will lose their bearings, but will soon realize it and recover themselves. Some will be swept away, but these will be the men whose standards have only a conventional and superficial footing or none at all, and in them our western civilization has already failed. But if our boys are to come back better from their experience, as most of them will, we must do our part. And our part is to get a better grasp of our own convictions and weed out what is merely traditional and inert. It will be as fatal for us to condemn what is harmless as to approve what is wrong. "Hospitality of mind together with firmness of character will alone fit us for meeting the strains of the moment and save the day for the America of tomorrow."

The Faith of the Man in the Ranks

This is a protest by Lieutenant Harold Hersey against the superficial studies of the American soldier which have appeared in the press. He writes in the August number of *Scribner's*. These accounts fail because the soldier does not reveal his mind to chance visitors and inquisitors.

To read some of the articles one would think the writers were treating inanimate objects, pure automats, when in fact there is no one quite so fine, so human, as our soldier. He is a refinement of American manhood, a concrete example of what the practical application of an ideal can accomplish. . . . He will come out of this bloody conflict sure of the things which are now moving him to action, the finer aspirations which must pass the acid test of fire and privation.

We should stop talking of our troops as if they were incomprehensible strangers. They have not changed. People seem to think that the religion of the soldier has undergone a mysterious transformation, but the same

faiths are in the army that are in civilian life. The men bring their faith with them. It is doubtful whether even immortality is stressed more than usual. One might say that the soldier has his old faith but wrapped up in patriotism and that he is eager to share the effort to crush autocracy as a religious duty.

But what are the elements of the faith of the soldier? "He believes sternly and irrevocably in a higher being. I have not yet met a man who did not believe this." The faith of the men is concrete. They will consult a chaplain of any denomination if he be a real man. Sympathy and comradeship are higher in their esteem than beliefs. Distinctions of faith have largely disappeared among the Protestants, their common faith resting on the fundamental solidities of human nature, honor, courage, and truth. Soldiers demand vital, concrete sermons devoid of platitudes. Their religion is a simple thing, and they are too busy and too serious to have any patience with nebulous fancies or far-away theories.

The insistence of the army upon absolute cleanliness is developing the individual soldier into a personality of clean motives and higher desires. His faith is clean and straightforward. "There can be no doubt that we are producing better men all round—higher types, physically, mentally, and spiritually. The faith of these higher men is based on the same things that held our forefathers to the work of settling the Civil War and it cannot help produce that ideal that gave us in the past the material of our great leaders."

The Conditions of Tolerance

An attempt to clear up the meaning of the idea of tolerance is made in the *Unpopular Review* for July-September. Tolerance is defined as willingness to sanction the existence of views at variance with our own. But there is an inherent contradiction involved. We are willing to have an opposite

view exist only when we are not entirely convinced that our own view is true. "The real belief in absolute truth is a missionary state of mind and carries with it the faith that truth is the one thing worth having." Today we have learned caution. We are modest enough to be willing to admit a view differing from our own because we realize that both may be right. The real tests of tolerance are the commoner cases in which if I am right, you are wrong. "When we say, 'Oh, yes, we both believe in God: to me he is Life Force, to you, Jehovah,' we know in our hearts that we are simply conniving at the draining of all definite meaning from the word in order to confuse the issue and to keep the peace." Even in such cases there are three conditions which make tolerance tenable. The first is that we do not really care about the issue. We are tolerant with the ease of indifference. Modern Christianity and modern paganism are tolerant of each other in this way. If these two ideals dared to stand forth and contest the field, there would be an end of tolerance—a holy war and clearing of the atmosphere. The second condition of tolerance is that we shall be so mentally sophisticated as to be too cautious to be certain of final truth. And so our faith is paralyzed. Only bigots and fanatics set fire to the world without scruple. The third form of imperfect conviction on which tolerance is based is the view of truth as purely personal and relative. The man who holds to such subjectivism tries to put himself at the center of indifference, and his one conviction is that all standards are relative. Challenge this conviction and he is intolerant enough.

So, after all, it is incomplete conviction that makes tolerance plausible. Of course it is possible to abandon the claim to absolute truth. Real tolerance can have meaning only as applied to a conflict of present issues.

By assuming tolerance as a possession or as a goal we have lost the driving power of conviction

which more primitive, less imaginative forms of belief still hold. Perfect tolerance would be an anaesthetic influence; it would militate against that clash of open conflict in which alone are ideas tested. If tolerance is to be achieved only by proportionate weakening of conviction the prevailing acceptance of such an ideal may not merely be a crying for the moon but for a burning toy balloon which would be of no value to us if we had it.

Treaties of Peace

Interest is more and more centered on the peace that is to reconstitute the world after the war. Lenetta M. Cooper presents a study of the defects of peace treaties in the *Public* for July 20. She feels that there has never been such a tremendous opportunity for rebuilding the whole social and economic structure of society. The British Labor Party is demanding that there be no patched-up settlement but a new social order built from the ground up. The demand is insistent that this war shall end war. But may we have any well-founded confidence that the peace treaties will mean the end of struggle for this generation at least? The story of the past is not encouraging. Quoting from statisticians she states that "from the year 1496 B.C. to 1861 A.D. in 3,358 years there were 227 years of peace and 3,130 years of war, that is, thirteen years of war for every year of peace. Within the last three centuries there have been 286 wars in Europe. From the year 1500 B.C. to 1860 A.D. more than 8,000 treaties of peace were concluded. The average time they remained in force was two years."

A study of the peace conferences of the nineteenth century reveals certain significant features: (1) They were conducted in secret. After they were finally concluded they were ratified by the governments without consulting the people. Not infrequently there have been certain secret articles of which the people knew nothing. (2) The negotiators of the treaties were always representatives of the propertied classes and never of the

men called upon to do the fighting. (3) The victors reserved for themselves such portions of disputed territory as contained valuable natural resources, thereby cutting off access to raw material which all needed; they took possession or kept control of strategic points in the world's highways on land and sea and so restricted free trade of the world's commerce; they reserved certain territory for colonization and so restricted free markets. The people in such territories were never consulted.

It is obvious that a new sort of conference must close this war and that the delegates must be democratically chosen to represent the people. Militarism must never again be trusted to keep the peace of the world. Mutual good-will and not mutual distrust must be the basis of the new social structure. There must be determination on the part of the people to see that these things shall be. Men have pleaded for it a century ago. Mere longings for permanent peace will not do. "The remedy lies in actual knowledge of the conditions which bring about wars and a firm determination on the part of the people to change those conditions."

The Issue of Slavic Freedom

The editorial opinion of the *New Republic* is that "Slavic liberty is an issue of such vast importance as to dwarf all other gains to be derived from the overthrow of German power. At the same time Slavic liberty will be a guaranty that other gains will be permanent." The case is argued in the number of July 6. Two-fifths of the entire population of Europe are Slavs. They comprise Russia, the White Russians, Ukraine, Poland, Czecho-Slovaks, Jugo-Slavs, Bulgars, and Roumanians, a whole galaxy of nations every one of which has the territory, the population, and the national self-consciousness prerequisite to a fruitful political development. And of all of this vast Slavic land only Serbia and Montenegro have been both independent and free. It is easy to raise doubts as

to the ability of these nations to maintain their freedom, but these adverse opinions rise from a failure to understand the dead weight of dynastic ambition and intrigue under which they have labored in the past.

We know that the Slavic races are capable of generating great political leaders and that they are capable of following these leaders with unswerving loyalty. Serbia's gallant record is no more disfigured by renegades than is that of Belgium. The Czecho-Slovaks are fighting for their national rights with a tenacity that would be impossible without skillful leadership and loyal following. The difficulties of Germany in Ukraine argue a people of independent spirit and the Soviet republic in Russia is displaying a remarkable survival power in the face of German aggression and allied suspicion, famine, and industrial disorder and domestic political intrigue.

Give the Slavic peoples time and the elements of solidarity and mutual helpfulness will make of them strong nations. They stand to win most by the defeat of Germany. But they will equally benefit the world. They will solve the German problem forming barriers in every direction to German aggression.

We must have an organized League of Nations if civilization is not to perish by war. But the members of such a league must be real free nations, not conglomerate empires, like Austria-Hungary, Old Russia, and Germany, held together by force and militarism. And the first prerequisite to the formation of a permanent system of internationalism is the liberation of the Slavic nations. This was not foreseen as an issue of the war in 1914, but now Slavic liberation has become the fundamental issue. "A peace which should leave Germany in control of Poland and Ukraine, which should leave the Czecho-Slovaks and Jugo-Slavs under the yoke of the Dual Empire, would be a German peace no matter what territorial concessions the Central Empires might make to Italy or France."

Social Darwinism

A challenge to the doctrine of social Darwinism developed in Germany during the last half-century comes from the pen of David Starr Jordan. It appears in the *Public* of March 30. The dogma of social Darwinism is stated in two items: (1) There is a constant struggle among races and nations whereby the largest, strongest, and fiercest survive and the others go to the wall. (2) It is incumbent on the strong nations—those most populous and enjoying the most complete discipline—to subdue or exterminate the others. This is of course the justification for international war and racial oppression, and the doctrine of frightfulness is a logical corollary.

The biological argument for war, however, has no scientific validity and no legitimate relation to the teachings of Darwin. It has been developed to meet the needs of existing dynastic ambition. War is to be the test of *kultur*; the strong nation vindicates its right by ruthless destruction. All mercy and soft-heartedness are banished. But the whole dogma overlooks four vital truths: (1) The struggle for existence is primarily not a matter of rivalry, but the condition of persistence even in the face of adverse conditions. (2) The competition involved is one of the necessity of life, not a demand for collective and national destruction.

(3) It entirely ignores the law of mutual aid and the established fact that altruism is one of the most potent factors in natural selection. (4) The qualities of permanence and progress are not those of the forceful and merciless, for against these the greater power of the altruistic and co-operative races are sure to combine.

Altruism, in the form of mutual aid, is an undisputed fact reaching back into the animal and plant kingdom. "It is as old as selfishness and as hard to eradicate. It asks no external sanction, for individuals deficient in altruism pass away leaving no descendants. There is bounty on their heads, whether they be wolves or hawks or predatory men." Art, literature, music, and religion arise and are developed through mutual help. Altruism begins with the union of primitive cells, which results in a change to both. It appears later as an aggregate of cells in a complex organism, which gives specialization, differentiation, organization, sensation, and will in the higher forms. Men unite to form societies as individual cells unite to form the human body. The growth of society abridges individual freedom by making freedom valuable. Mutual aid involves mutual dependence. It gives a security and strength forever impossible under purely individualistic conditions. "This world is not the abode of the strong alone; it is also the home of the loving."